MARVEL COMICS
THE CHILD WITHIN: PART 5 OF 6
the SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN
VERMIN!™ THE GOBLIN!™ SPIDER IN THE MIDDLE!
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AUTHORITY
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50 YEARS OF CAPTAIN AMERICA
1941 – 1991
Sal Buscema

BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, STUDENT PETER PARKER GAINED THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH AND AGILITY OF AN ARACHNID! ARMED WITH HIS WONDROUS WEB-SHOOTERS, THE RELUCTANT SUPER HERO STRUGGLES WITH SINISTER SUPER-VILLAINS, MAKING ENDS MEET, AND MAINTAINING SOME SEMBLANCE OF A NORMAL LIFE!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN!™

...ARE YOU COMFORTABLE, EDWARD?
NOT...EDWARD...
YES, YOU ARE. VERMIN'S GONE AWAY. YOU'RE EDWARD NOW.
...EDWARD...
AND HOW OLD ARE YOU, EDWARD?
EIGHT. EIGHT YEARS OLD.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT LAST TIME?
THE BAD THING?
THE BAD THING. YOU WERE TELLING ME HOW YOU FELT WHEN IT HAPPENED.
NO. DON'T MAKE ME TELL. IT ALWAYS HURTS SO MUCH WHEN I TELL.
IT HURTS WHEN YOU DON'T TELL, EDWARD. TELLING... TELLING MAKES YOU FREE. TELLING HEALS YOU.
THE JUDGE.
YES?
THE JUDGE COMES INTO MY BEDROOM. I CAN'T EVEN SLEEP ANYMORE ...I JUST LAY THERE ...WAITING FOR HIM TO COME.
THE JUDGE, YOUR FATHER, EDWARD?
HE... HE LOOKS LIKE MY FATHER-- BUT--HE CAN'T BE! MY FATHER WOULDN'T DO...WOULDN'T DO THE BAD THING!
WHAT? WHAT DOES HE DO?
HE--HE TOUCHES ME! AND...AND HE MAKES ME TOUCH HIM! AND... AND IT MAKES ME FEEL SO BAD... MAKES ME SICK AND SORRY AT THE SAME TIME!
CAN'T THINK ABOUT IT! CAN'T LET MYSELF REMEMBER! GOTTA PUSH IT AWAY!
PUSH IT WAY DOWN DEEP!
INTO THE SSSEWERSSS.
IT'S ALL RIGHT, EDWARD. IT'S ALL RIGHT.
EDWARD'SSS GONE.
I'M VERMIN.

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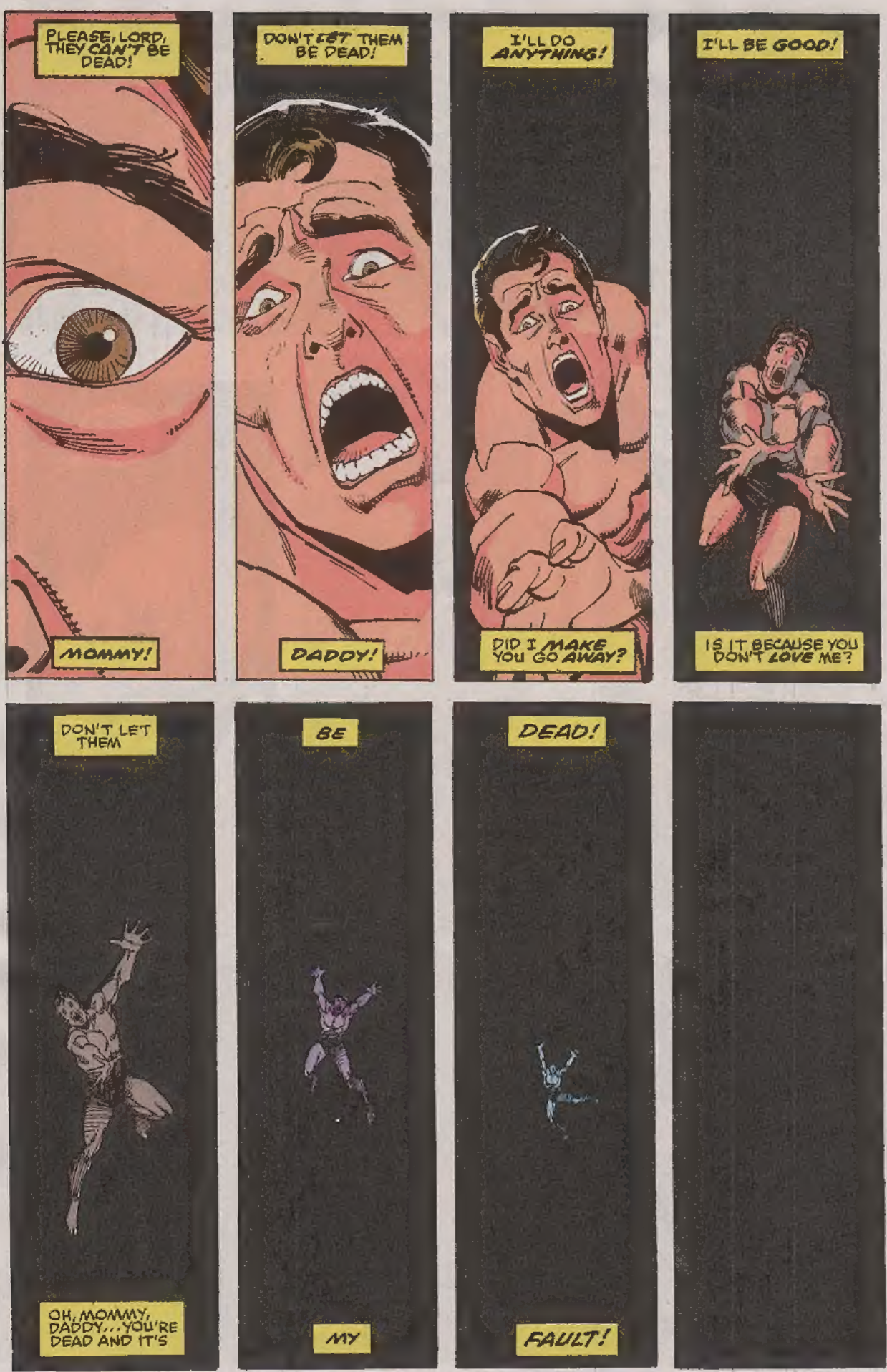
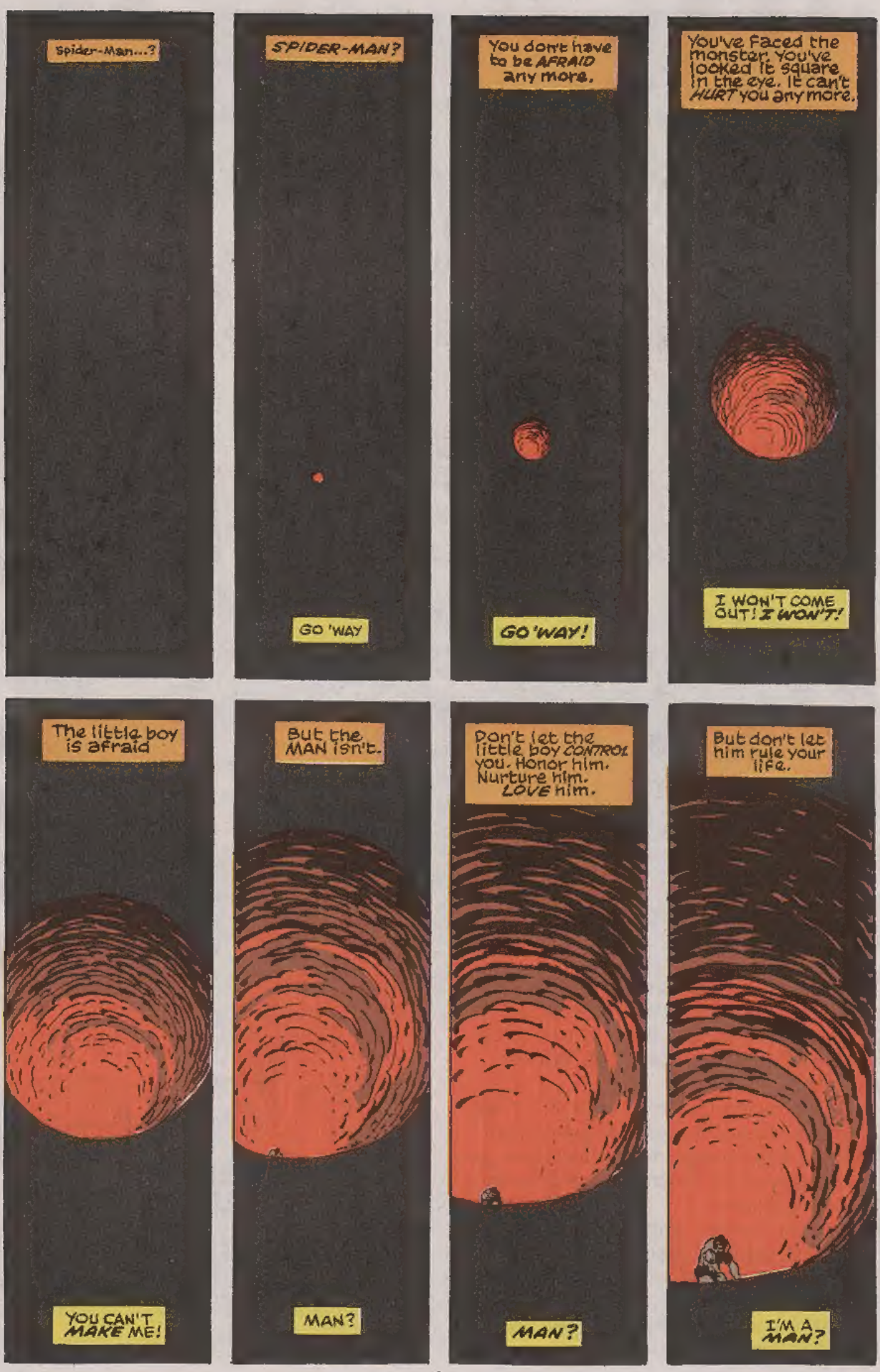
I REMEMBER IT ALL!!
SSSUCH BAD THINGSSS YOU DID TO ME! SSSUCH BAD, BAD THINGS! AND WHAT DID YOU ALWAYSSS TELL ME WHEN I WASSS LITTLE?
IF SSSOMEONE DOES A BAD THING--
--THEY'VE GOT TO PAY!
NO!
DON'T HURT HIM!
PLEASE.


PLEASE, LORD, THEY CAN'T BE DEAD!
MOMMY!
DON'T LET THEM BE DEAD!
DADDY!
I'LL DO ANYTHING!
DID I MAKE YOU GO AWAY?
I'LL BE GOOD!
IS IT BECAUSE YOU DON'T LOVE ME?
DON'T LET THEM
OH, MOMMY, DADDY... YOU'RE DEAD AND IT'S
BE
MY
DEAD!
FAULT!

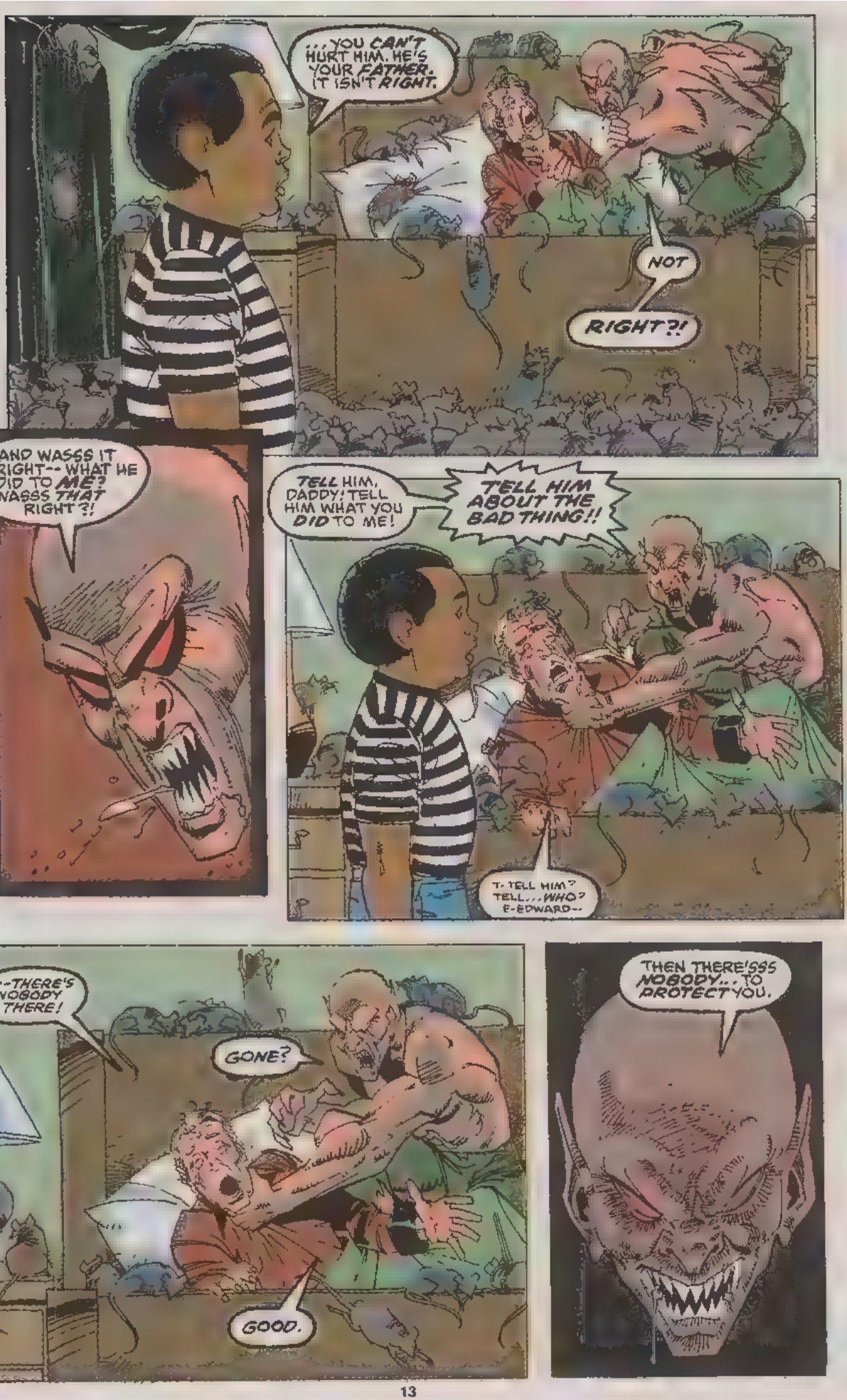

Spider-Man...?
SPIDER-MAN?
GO 'WAY
You don't have to be AFRAID any more.
GO 'WAY!
You've faced the monster. You've looked it square in the eye. It can't HURT you any more.
I WON'T COME OUT! I WON'T!
The little boy is afraid
YOU CAN'T MAKE ME!
But the MAN isn't.
MAN?
Don't let the little boy CONTROL you. Honor him. Nurture him. LOVE him.
MAN?
But don't let him rule your life.
I'M A MAN?

YES. A GOOD man. A STRONG man. Of intelligence and WORTH.
BUT I FEEL LIKE A LITTLE BOY. JUST A BAD. BAD LITTLE BOY.
That little boy didn't do ANYTHING wrong.
HE DID, TOO! HE WAS BAD AND MOMMY AND DADDY STOPPED LOVING HIM--
That's what the little boy THINKS. But the man knows BETTER.
--AND THEY WENT AWAY AND THEY NEVER CAME BACK!
He knows that it wasn't his FAULT.
ITWASITWASITWAS ITWASITWASITWAS ITWAS
It WASN'T!
You can be a little boy...and spend the rest of your life afraid and guilty. You can wrap that guilt AROUND YOURSELF and hide in it FOREVER--
I DON'T WANT TO HIDE ANY MORE. AND I'M TIRED OF BEING HURT BY THE PAST.
--or you can tuck that little boy away in your HEART. Be a FATHER to him.
I CAN'T LET MYSELF BE CONTROLLED ANY MORE. I CAN'T BE CHANGED BY MY CHILDHOOD.
Be a MAN.
I'M A MAN.
BE A MAN.
I'M A--
AULTITISALLMYFAULTITISALLMYFAULTITISALLMYFAULTITISALLMYFAULTITISALLMYFAULTITISALLMYFAULTITIS

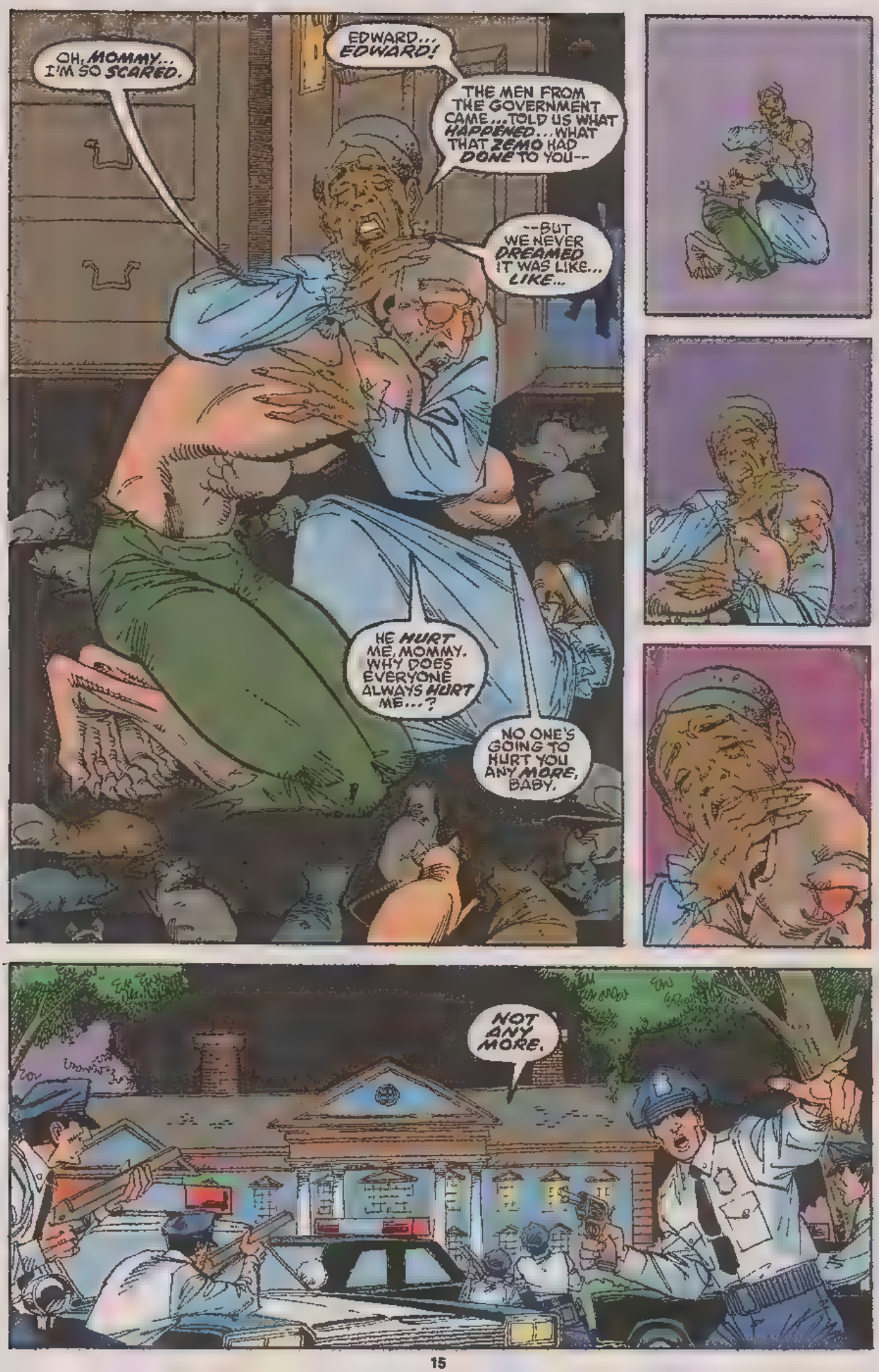
J.M. DeMATTEIS WRITER | SAL BUSCEMA ARTIST | JOE ROSEN LETTERER | BOB SHAREN COLORIST | DANNY FINGEROTH EDITOR | TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

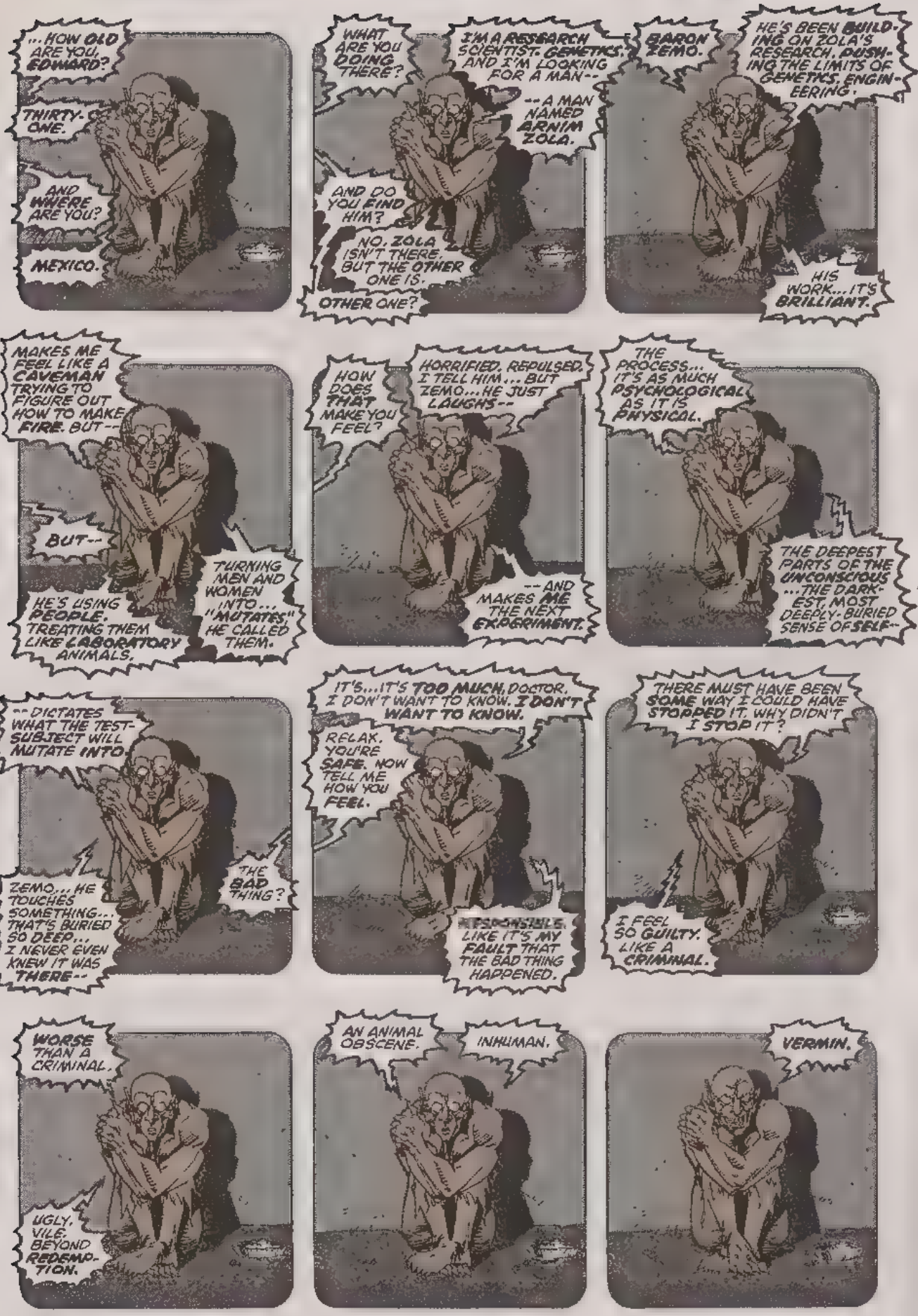
TOOMUCHTOOMUCHTOOMUCH THISISALLTOO
MUCH!
KR
AK
WHERE AM I? DOESN'T MATTER. DOESN'T MATTER.
JUST GET UP. MOVE. GET UP!
DON'TWANNATHINKDON'T WANNAHURTJUST WANNA
GET OUT OF HERE
NOW!
FEEL LIKE I'M BEING RIPPED IN HALF!
WAIT!
FEEL LIKE MY MIND AND HEART ARE ON FIRE!
WAIT!
FEEL
LIKE
WAIT!

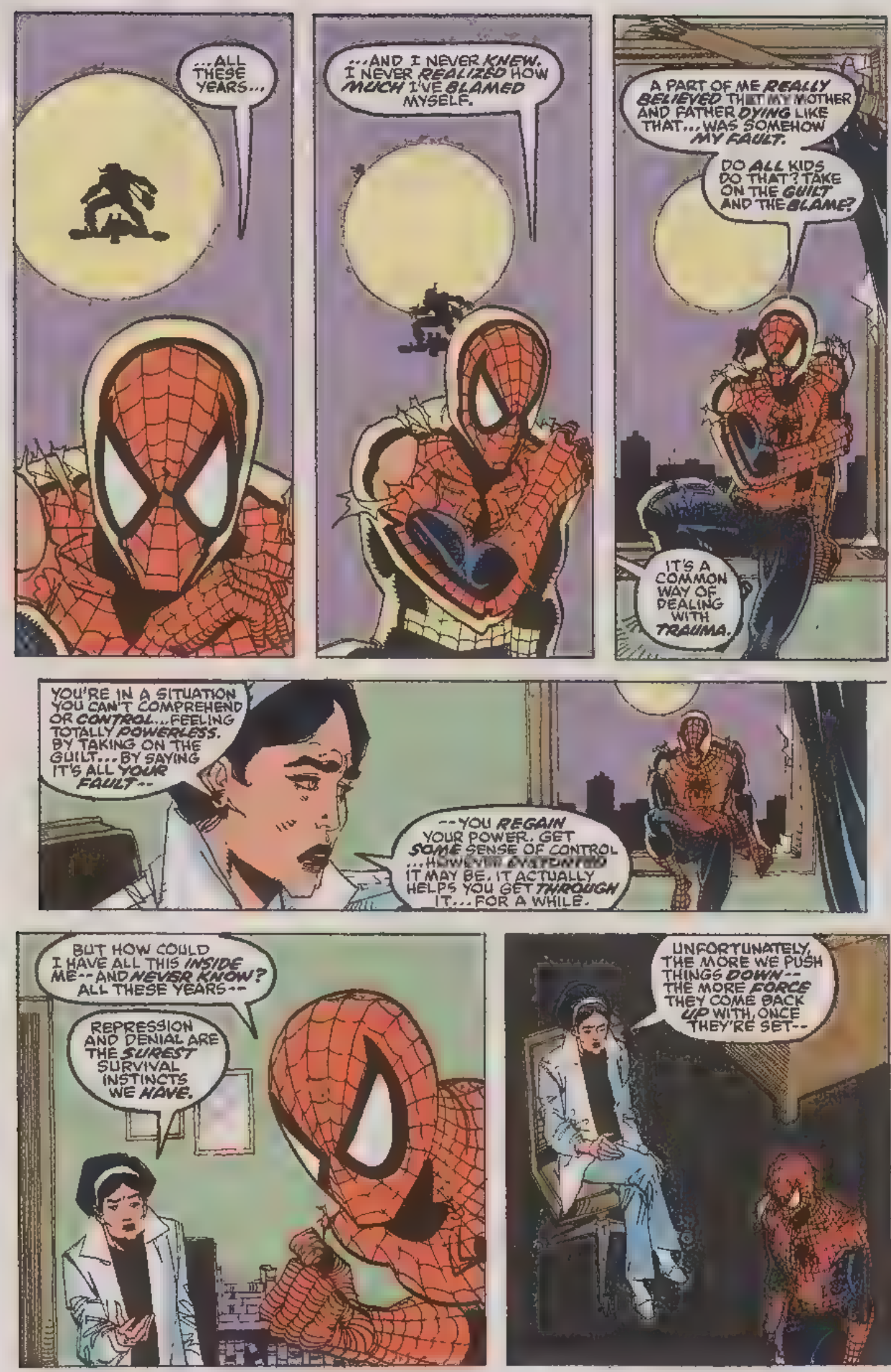
TAKE A DEEP BREATH. NICE AND SLOW. REMEMBER.
YOU WERE WITH HARRY. HE'D BECOME THE GREEN GOBLIN AGAIN.
HE'D DRUGGED YOU. SOME KIND OF HALLUCINOGENIC. HE GOT INTO YOUR MIND.
HE OPENED DOORS THAT YOU NEVER KNEW WERE THERE.
BUT SOMEBODY HELPED YOU.
SPIDER-MAN--
SOMEBODY PULLED YOU UP OUT OF THE DARKNESS.
DOCTOR... KAFKA...?
DR. KAFKA.
YOU'VE FACED THE MONSTER, SPIDER-MAN.
AND YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.


...YOU CAN'T HURT HIM. HE'S YOUR FATHER. IT ISN'T RIGHT.
NOT RIGHT?!
AND WASSS IT RIGHT-- WHAT HE DID TO ME? WASSS THAT RIGHT?!
TELL HIM, DADDY! TELL HIM WHAT YOU DID TO ME!
TELL HIM ABOUT THE BAD THING!!
T-TELL HIM? TELL...WHO? E-EDWARD--
--THERE'S NOBODY THERE!
GONE?
GOOD.
THEN THERE'SSS NOBODY... TO PROTECT YOU.

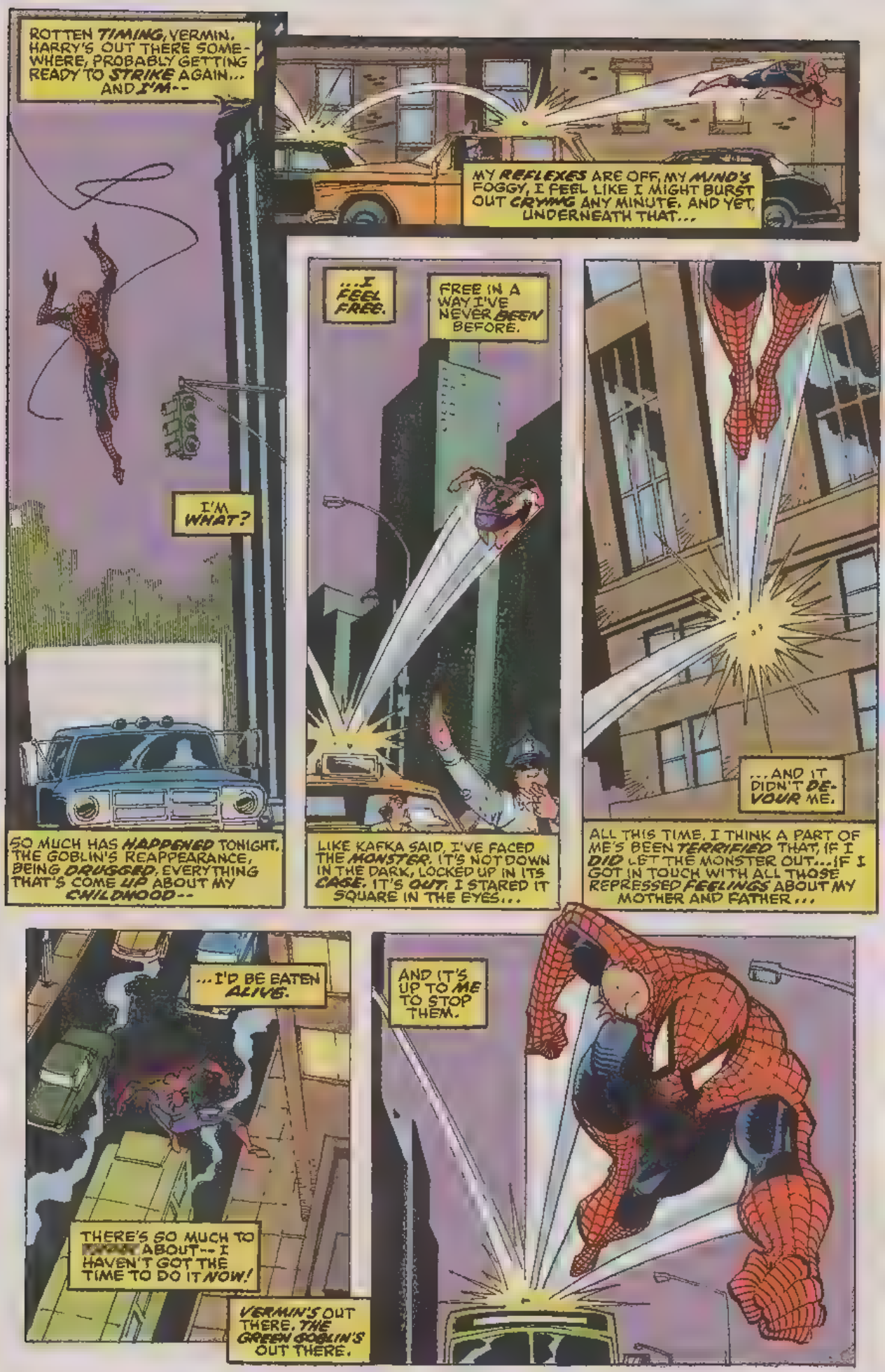
YOU THINK YOU'VE DONE BAD THINGSSS, DADDY?
WELL, WAIT'LL YOU SSSEE THE BAD THINGS I DO TO YOU!!!
EDWARD-- DEAR GOD--
--IT'S YOUR FATHER!
DON'T HURT YOUR FATHER, EDWARD!
RRROWRR
MOMMY...?
YES.


OH, MOMMY... I'M SO SCARED.
EDWARD... EDWARD!
THE MEN FROM THE GOVERNMENT CAME...TOLD US WHAT HAPPENED...WHAT THAT ZEMO HAD DONE TO YOU--
--BUT WE NEVER DREAMED IT WAS LIKE... LIKE...
HE HURT ME, MOMMY. WHY DOES EVERYONE ALWAYS HURT ME...?
NO ONE'S GOING TO HURT YOU ANY MORE, BABY.
NOT ANY MORE.

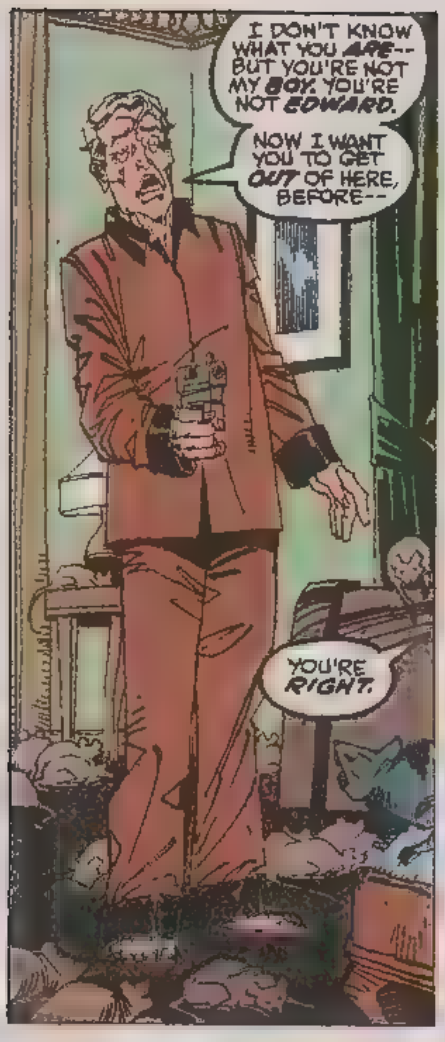

...HOW OLD ARE YOU, EDWARD?
THIRTY-ONE.
AND WHERE ARE YOU?
MEXICO.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
I'M A RESEARCH SCIENTIST. GENETICS. AND I'M LOOKING FOR A MAN--
--A MAN NAMED ARNIM ZOLA.
AND DO YOU FIND HIM?
NO. ZOLA ISN'T THERE. BUT THE OTHER ONE IS.
OTHER ONE?
BARON ZEMO.
HE'S BEEN BUILDING ON ZOLA'S RESEARCH. PUSHING THE LIMITS OF GENETICS. ENGINEERING.
HIS WORK...IT'S BRILLIANT.
MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A CAVEMAN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE FIRE. BUT--
BUT--
HE'S USING PEOPLE. TREATING THEM LIKE LABORATORY ANIMALS.
TURNING MEN AND WOMEN INTO... "MUTATES." HE CALLED THEM.
HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?
HORRIFIED. REPULSED. I TELL HIM... BUT ZEMO...HE JUST LAUGHS--
--AND MAKES ME THE NEXT EXPERIMENT.
THE PROCESS... IT'S AS MUCH PSYCHOLOGICAL AS IT IS PHYSICAL.
THE DEEPEST PARTS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS ...THE DARKEST, MOST DEEPLY-BURIED SENSE OF SELF--
--DICTATES WHAT THE TEST-SUBJECT WILL MUTATE INTO.
ZEMO... HE TOUCHES SOMETHING... THAT'S BURIED SO DEEP... I NEVER EVEN KNEW IT WAS THERE--
THE BAD THING?
IT'S...IT'S TOO MUCH, DOCTOR. I DON'T WANT TO KNOW. I DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
RELAX. YOU'RE SAFE. NOW TELL ME HOW YOU FEEL.
RESPONSIBLE. LIKE IT'S MY FAULT THAT THE BAD THING HAPPENED.
THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME WAY I COULD HAVE STOPPED IT. WHY DIDN'T I STOP IT?
I FEEL SO GUILTY. LIKE A CRIMINAL.
WORSE THAN A CRIMINAL.
UGLY. VILE. BEYOND REDEMPTION.
AN ANIMAL OBSCENE.
INHUMAN.
VERMIN.


...ALL THESE YEARS...
...AND I NEVER KNEW. I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH I'VE BLAMED MYSELF.
A PART OF ME REALLY BELIEVED THAT MY MOTHER AND FATHER DYING LIKE THAT... WAS SOMEHOW MY FAULT.
DO ALL KIDS DO THAT? TAKE ON THE GUILT AND THE BLAME?
IT'S A COMMON WAY OF DEALING WITH TRAUMA.
YOU'RE IN A SITUATION YOU CAN'T COMPREHEND OR CONTROL... FEELING TOTALLY POWERLESS. BY TAKING ON THE GUILT... BY SAYING IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT--
--YOU REGAIN YOUR POWER. GET SOME SENSE OF CONTROL ...HOWEVER DISTORTED IT MAY BE. IT ACTUALLY HELPS YOU GET THROUGH IT... FOR A WHILE.
BUT HOW COULD I HAVE ALL THIS INSIDE ME--AND NEVER KNOW? ALL THESE YEARS--
REPRESSION AND DENIAL ARE THE SUREST SURVIVAL INSTINCTS WE HAVE.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE MORE WE PUSH THINGS DOWN-- THE MORE FORCE THEY COME BACK UP WITH, ONCE THEY'RE SET--

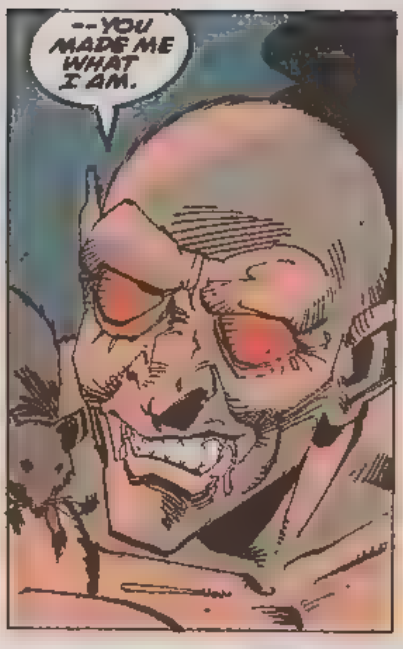
DOCTOR KAFKA! DOCTOR KAFKA!
--FRED...?
IT'S ALL OVER THE NEWS, DOCTOR!
WHAT IS?
VERMIN!
EDWARD?!
WHERE IS HE?!
SCARSDALE.
HE'S HOLDING SOME RETIRED JUDGE AND HIS WIFE HOSTAGE AND--
JUDGE--?
OH, NO--!
SPIDER-MAN! HURRY! WE'VE GOT TO--


ROTTEN TIMING, VERMIN. HARRY'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, PROBABLY GETTING READY TO STRIKE AGAIN... AND I'M--
I'M WHAT?
SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED TONIGHT, THE GOBLIN'S REAPPEARANCE, BEING DRUGGED, EVERYTHING THAT'S COME UP ABOUT MY CHILDHOOD--
MY REFLEXES ARE OFF, MY MIND'S FOGGY, I FEEL LIKE I MIGHT BURST OUT CRYING ANY MINUTE. AND YET, UNDERNEATH THAT...
...I FEEL FREE.
FREE IN A WAY I'VE NEVER BEEN BEFORE.
LIKE KAFKA SAID, I'VE FACED THE MONSTER. IT'S NOT DOWN IN THE DARK, LOCKED UP IN ITS CAGE. IT'S OUT. I STARED IT SQUARE IN THE EYES...
...AND IT DIDN'T DEVOUR ME.
ALL THIS TIME, I THINK A PART OF ME'S BEEN TERRIFIED THAT, IF I DID LET THE MONSTER OUT...IF I GOT IN TOUCH WITH ALL THOSE REPRESSED FEELINGS ABOUT MY MOTHER AND FATHER...
...I'D BE EATEN ALIVE.
THERE'S SO MUCH TO [redacted] ABOUT-- I HAVEN'T GOT THE TIME TO DO IT NOW!
VERMIN'S OUT THERE. THE GREEN GOBLIN'S OUT THERE.
AND IT'S UP TO ME TO STOP THEM.

NOOOOOO!!
MEN IN BLUE... ALWAYSSS THERE! HITTING AND HURT! HOUNDING ME! JUDGING ME!
WHY WON'T THEY LEAVE ME ALONE?
I'M NOT A CRIMINAL! I'M NOT BAD!
I'M NOT BAD!!
EDWARD... DON'T WORRY, SON. I'LL PROTECT YOU. I'LL MAKE SURE THAT--
PROTECT ME? YOU... YOU WERE NEVER THERE TO PROTECT ME!
ALL THE TIME... WHEN HE WASSS TOUCHING ME... HURTING ME... MAKING ME SSSO ASHAMED--
--WHERE WERE YOU, MOMMY?!
WHERE WERE YOU?!
THAT-- THAT WILL BE ENOUGH.


I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE-- BUT YOU'RE NOT MY BOY. YOU'RE NOT EDWARD.
NOW I WANT YOU TO GET OUT OF HERE, BEFORE--
YOU'RE RIGHT.

I'M NOT EDWARD. I'M VERMIN. NOW--AND FOREVER.
DON'T YOU LIKE WHAT I'VE BECOME? YOU HAVE TO LIKE IT. AFTER ALL... DADDY--


--YOU MADE ME WHAT I AM.

GET HIM.

UHHHHHHH!!!

AHHHHHH!!!

YOU'VE BEEN VERY BAD, DADDY. VERY, VERY BAD.
AND NOW I'M THE JUDGE.
AND THE JUDGE FINDSSS YOU GUILTY.
AND THE SENTENCE IS--

--DEATH.
AAARRRRH!!
I CAN'T DO IT! WHY CAN'T I DO IT?
WHY CAN'T I KILL YOU?!

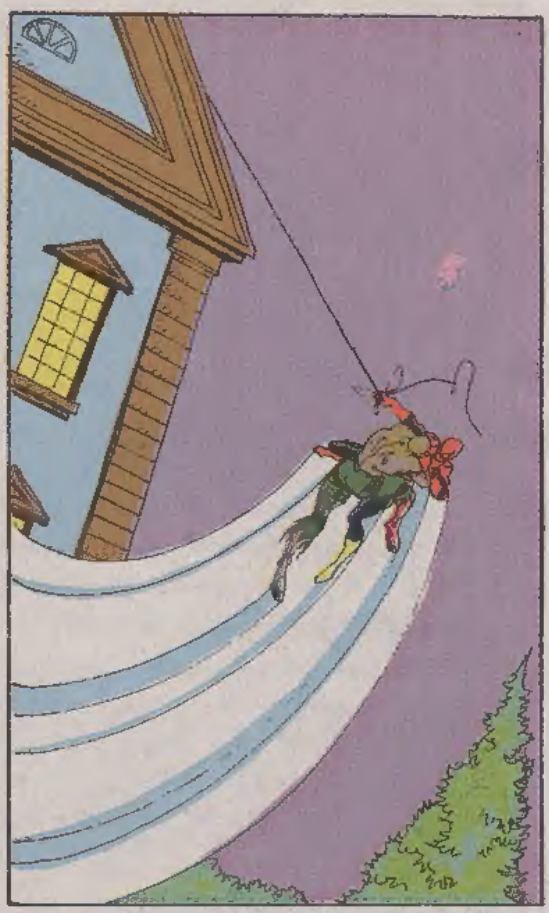
EDWARD--
DADDY I LOVE YOU... I--
NO! EDWARD LOVESSS YOU! BUT VERMIN... VERMIN HATESSS YOU! HATESSSYOUHATESSSYOU HATESSSYOU!! VERMIN CAN KILL YOU!
AND
VERMIN
WILL.
I DON'T THINK SO.
THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH PAIN, ENOUGH HURTING, FOR ALL OF US.
NOW COME ON, VER--EDWARD. LET'S GO SEE DOCTOR [redacted] IT'S TIME TO PUT AN END TO ALL THIS ONCE AND FOR--
SSSPIDER!
AT LASST! SSSOMEONE I CAN HATE--
--WITHOUT FEELING SSSO CONFUSSSED!
SSSOMEONE I CAN HATE!!

KRASSHH!

OKAY--HE'S OUT OF THE HOUSE!
NOW LET'S MOVE!

LET'S NAIL THAT FREAAAAAAAAAA!!
GET 'EM OFF!

THWIP!
GET 'EM OFF!



KRRUNNNCH
LISTEN TO ME! IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS--
ROWWW RRRR!!
SHRAKK!
GRRRRRRR

FWIISH!
KRAK!
KOOOM!
AND NOW, SSSPIDER--
--I'M GONNA EAT YOU ALIVE.
FZZZZ
SORRY, VERMIN--
AKK!!

THE CHILD WITHIN CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE!